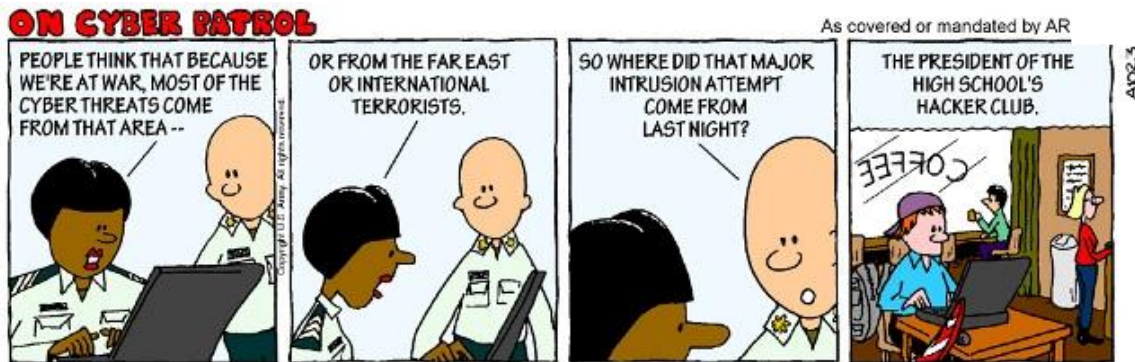


# Who Are the Real Cyber Bad Guys?

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The cyber universe can be like the streets of Falujah. The threats are constant and all around you. Only continuous watchfulness and using all available defensive strategies and tactics provides any kind of protection. And even then, safety is never a sure thing. While computer attacks are not usually life threatening, a successful cyber incursion can destroy vital data and computer infrastructures and certainly put lives at risk.

It's easy to paint a frightening picture of the cyber universe. Potential cyber threats and active cyber attacks are part of daily life. From 1 October to 9 December of 2006 over 15,000 incidents were reported by the Army Computer Emergency Response Team (ACERT). That's an average of more than 200 incidents in any given 24-hour period. Those figures do not even count many other minor attacks that harmlessly bounce off the outer defenses of our networks. Even in civilian life there are signs of the growing threat. Major insurance companies now offer identity theft insurance. Spam – some containing extremely malicious code – is on the rise. Study after study predicts the increasing chances of a devastating cyber attack against the U.S. military, our national infrastructure and key businesses.

Just knowing who is attacking you is a challenge. Where are all these threats coming from? The answer may surprise you. Obviously we are under attack from the usual suspects: terrorists, rouge nations and state-sanctioned enemies. Yet, an unauthorized intrusion, a virus/worm/Trojan horse or a simple system scan can come just as easily from a student at the local coffee shop.

Believe it or not, just a few years ago most cyber attacks originated from the United States according to industry reports. Many others originated from countries that would be considered allies or at least friendly to the U.S. Obviously the sheer number of computers and users in these countries has something to do with those statistics. The point is that the threats come from every corner of the world and the only thing that will ensure safety is constant vigilance and the use of every available protection practice and technology.

The Internet is an incredible source of information, education, communication and entertainment. Our military relies heavily on the most sophisticated technology in the world. Businesses, from the drugstore to the car manufacturer to the electrical power company are heavily reliant on many kinds of computer technology. The use of technology is growing in the average household. This is happening worldwide, even in developing countries. We're not going to stop using it, so we need to protect ourselves. Whether uniformed, civilian or contractor personnel, we all need to make information assurance and cyber security practices as much of our daily lives as locking a home's front and back doors. Technology benefits far outweigh the risks...if you're smart about it.